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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, January 28, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "ORANGES AND GRAPEFRUIT." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Today I'm going to bring you the latest news from the Department of Agriculture about oranges and grapefruit. The scientists there call them fruits with a romantic past -- a useful present -- and a promising future.

Before I get to the news let's take a glance at the romantic past of these fruits. First for the orange. Many centuries ago the orange grew in only one part of the world -- that was the Orient. When tradesmen from Europe went there to buy spices, rare silks, and perfumes they tasted this juicy fruit.

Then they threaded their way back to Europe by the perilous trade routes. They carried their wares by water -- by camel -- on mule back. They also carried seeds of the wondrous fruits that grew in the East.

Gradually along these same trade routes went the orange. Soon it reached the shores of the blue Mediterranean. And from there it came to America.

Maybe you know the rest of the story -- of how the Spanish started oranges in St. Augustine, Florida, near Ponce de Leon's fountain of eternal youth. And across the continent the San Franciscan monks planted the orange along the coast of what is now California.

The past of the grapefruit is probably romantic also -- but more mysterious. We can't find out much about it's family tree. We do know that it came here many years later than the orange -- directly from the West Indies.

But that's all history now. Let's look at the useful -- practical present of these citrus fruits.

Today, grapefruit and oranges are two of the most important fruits we grow in the United States. In late years -- since 1919 especially -- there's been a big increase in the orange and grapefruit crops.

We're right in the middle of the 1937-38 citrus season now. It looks like a record crop of oranges and a grapefruit crop second only to last year's big yield. Of course weather conditions can still do a lot to make the final harvest smaller. But if there are no big freezes or other calamities we're going to have a bountiful supply of oranges and grapefruit straight through 1938.

When you go to shop for oranges or grapefruit you'll naturally pick out the best looking ones -- those that are well-shaped and have fine, smooth skins. Lift the fruit. See if it seems heavy for its size. If it does, it's probably well filled with juice.

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Avoid fruit that is puffy or bulged at the ends. Look for decayed spots -- especially on the stem end of each fruit.

And of course, buy whichever variety you like best. So far experiments have not proved that it's necessary to buy any variety because of its especially high vitamin C content.

And here we are again with vitamin C. Any talk on citrus fruits eventually works around to that. For it's the vitamin C in grapefruit and oranges that makes them so valuable.

Vitamin C, you remember, is the one that is tied up with the prevention of scurvy. In our country scurvy shows up mostly in borderline cases. Some of the symptoms are loss of appetite, loss of weight, and fatigue. We also need vitamin C for proper "tooth nutrition."

Our bodies can not store vitamin C. So all of us -- children and adults - must get a supply of it every day.

Vitamin C isn't especially plentiful in the foods we eat. It is easily destroyed by heat. Tomatoes are the only cooked foods that contain it in considerable amounts. Aside from that we must rely on uncooked fruits and vegetables for our supply. Citrus fruits rate as excellent as a source of vitamin C.

I might mention a lot of other things about oranges and grapefruit -- more about their food value and of ways to use them. But instead, let's do a little crystal gazing. Let's look into the promising future.

First, it looks as though these fruits are going to keep right on growing in popularity. In the next five years there'll probably be even more of them coming to market. By that time many orchards that are young now will come into full bearing.

And perhaps in the future the new citrus varieties that the scientists are working on now will become important commercially. They're developing some very interesting hybrids.

To me one of the most fascinating things about horticulture is how a cross between a tangerine and an orange can produce an entirely new fruit -- the tangor. And how tangelos are a hybrid of the grapefruit and the tangerine. Then there are the limequats and the orangequats. I'm not just sure of their ancestry, but they're the result of crosses somewhere in the citrus family.

And now just a final word about the fruit now on the market. If you are planning to make orange or grapefruit marmalade this year, now is a good time to do it. The fruit's in prime condition and it's cheap.

You'll need smooth, thick-skinned fruit. In fact the thicker the skin, the more of that jelly-making substance called pectin, you'll have in your marmalade.
